

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

4201 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230



OFFICE OF THE
DIRECTOR

September 19, 2001

550852

RECEIVED

SEP 24 2001

Mr. Lake H. Barret, Acting Director
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 30307
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

Dear Mr. Barrett,

Thank you for your recent letter concerning public comment on the suitability of Yucca Mountain as a repository for spent nuclear fuel and high level radioactive waste.

The NSF mission is to support research and education in science and engineering. In some instances, there may be some connection between NSF-supported activities in the development of new technologies and waste isolation. Such work might include research on geological formations or on new materials which might ultimately affect waste containment.

While we at NSF recognize the importance of the waste isolation issue, the agency is not in a position to respond officially to the questions that you have posed. The research that we support is not directed toward mission-specific issues such as waste isolation. Without comprehensive technical information and evaluation, we are not able to provide advice regarding such important policy matters. We do recognize that there have been numerous position papers on the matters you are evaluating – by the NAS and by a number of the professional societies. I would encourage you to make sure that you have included their input before making your final assessment.

Waste isolation is clearly a very important topic. If there is anything else that we may help you with, I would encourage you to make contact with members of our staff representing specific scientific and technical areas. Thank you for considering NSF input, and I wish you well in the deliberative process ahead.

With best wishes,

Rita R. Colwell
Director